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October 14, 2020

Robert R. Redfield, MD  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
395 E Street SW, Suite 9100  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Seema Verma, MPH  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Director Redfield and Administer Verma,

I am writing to request that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) work to expand access to the flu vaccine this fall. I am offering my assistance to ensure that the flu vaccines can be administered at established COVID-19 testing locations as well as other central community locations throughout our nation.

The impact of COVID-19 on Iowa and this country has been crippling. COVID-19 cases continue to increase, hospitalizations are spiking, and medical experts have raised concerns about a fall and winter COVID-19 increase. Traditionally, flu vaccination is a simple process that is distributed at many of the health centers we engage with in our normal lives. A vaccine can be offered during a checkup at the doctor's office or while filling a prescription at a pharmacy. However, COVID-19 has resulted in an underutilization of these health centers, as many Americans are avoiding them to reduce potential exposure to COVID-19.

I am asking the CDC and CMS to offer a flu vaccine alongside a COVID-19 test this year. This would significantly increase general access to the vaccine while placing little administrative burden on our doctors, nurses, and trained medical professionals. If you determine that the law prohibits this, I am offering to work with your agencies to craft legislation to ensure we can expand vaccine access as needed during this pandemic.

We must work together to meet the American public where they are in the new reality of COVID-19. Surveys show us that Americans are avoiding medical centers during COVID-19, which means they are not going to have easy access to a flu vaccine. Many individuals, especially our seniors, who are at high risk due to COVID-19 are also at high risk due to the flu. We cannot offer the same services in the same places in a year when everything has changed.

That is why I am asking you to expand flu vaccinations into new locations as part of your COVID-19 response authorities. I know we share the common goal of preventing illness – be that COVID-19 or the flu. I offer any support I can to ensure that we meet the challenge of a new flu season during a global pandemic.

Sincerely,

  
Cindy Axne  
Member of Congress